

2026 GEORGIA WATER AND WASTEWATER REPORT

Prepared By:



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA

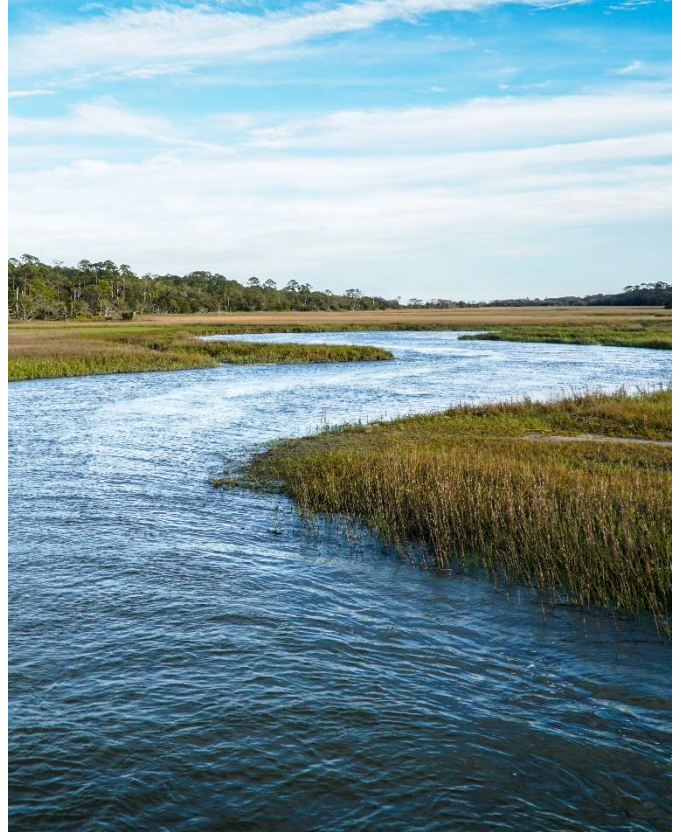
Carl Vinson
Institute of Government



ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report summarizes information collected about water and sewer rates in Georgia. This work is funded by the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) and data was compiled by the University of Georgia Carl Vinson Institute of Government.

In addition to this report, there is an online, interactive rates dashboard, where users can compare utilities against one another and various attributes such as geographic location, system characteristics, and customer demographics, as well as financial indicators and benchmarks. Furthermore, accompanying the dashboard is a standardized water and sewer rate sheet for each participating utility in a rates portal on georgiawaterrates.org.



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INTRODUCTION

Between October 2025 and March 2026, the UGA Carl Vinson Institute of Government conducted a rate update of 540 rate-charging water and sewer utilities in Georgia. A total of 470 utilities (87%) from all 159 counties in the state responded to the collections.

Water and sewer rate setting is one of a local government's most important environmental and public health responsibilities. This report provides utility professionals and public officials with an up-to-date summary of current statewide rate structures and trends to assist in the protection of public health, improvement of economic development, and promotion of sustainability in Georgia.

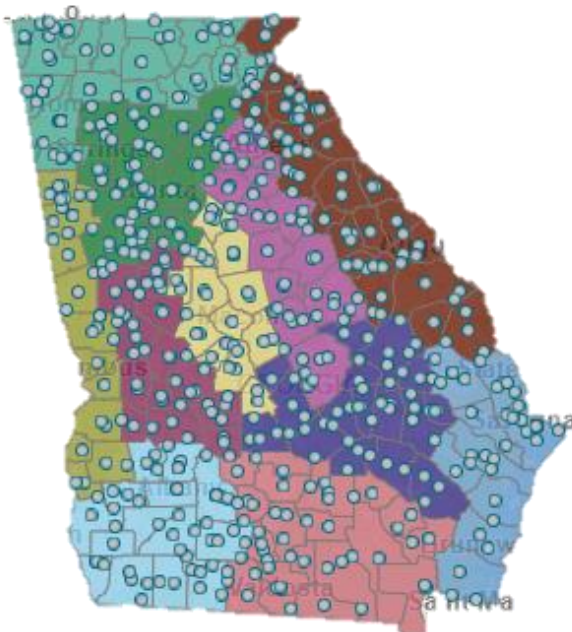
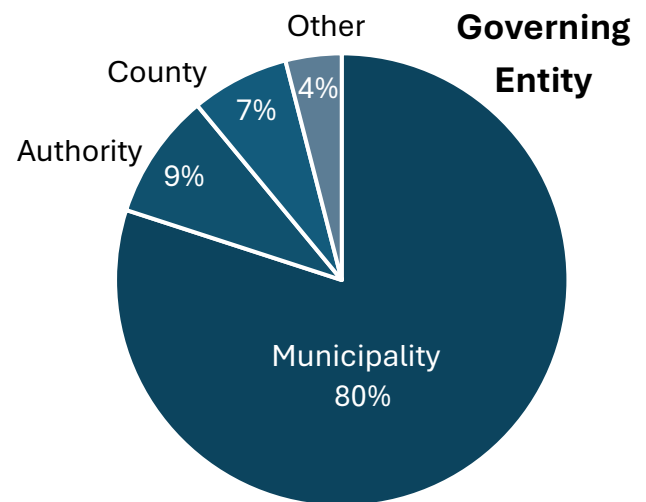


BY THE NUMBERS

525 utilities providing water

356 utilities providing wastewater

This graph shows the distribution of utility types. Most are municipal entities (~80%) managed by cities or towns, while others are owned by counties, utility districts, or authorities serving larger populations. The "other" category includes nonprofits and private organizations.



The map of Georgia highlights the 11 water planning regions and the water utilities in each county. Georgia's water planning regions work to achieve goals focused on sustainable use of water resources, protecting public health and natural systems, and enhancing Georgian's quality of life. Each region develops a water plan. Through the development of regional water plans, the regional water councils determine preferred water management practices to meet each region's future water resource needs. For more information about the state and regional water plans, go to waterplanning.georgia.gov.

WHAT DO RATE STRUCTURES LOOK LIKE?

Considerable variation exists in how utilities model rate structures, but almost all use a base charge or an allowance and a volumetric charge.

Base Charges

The set amount charged to each account unrelated to volume consumption.

- i.e., \$15 for each account
- Usually falls within \$10-\$30 range

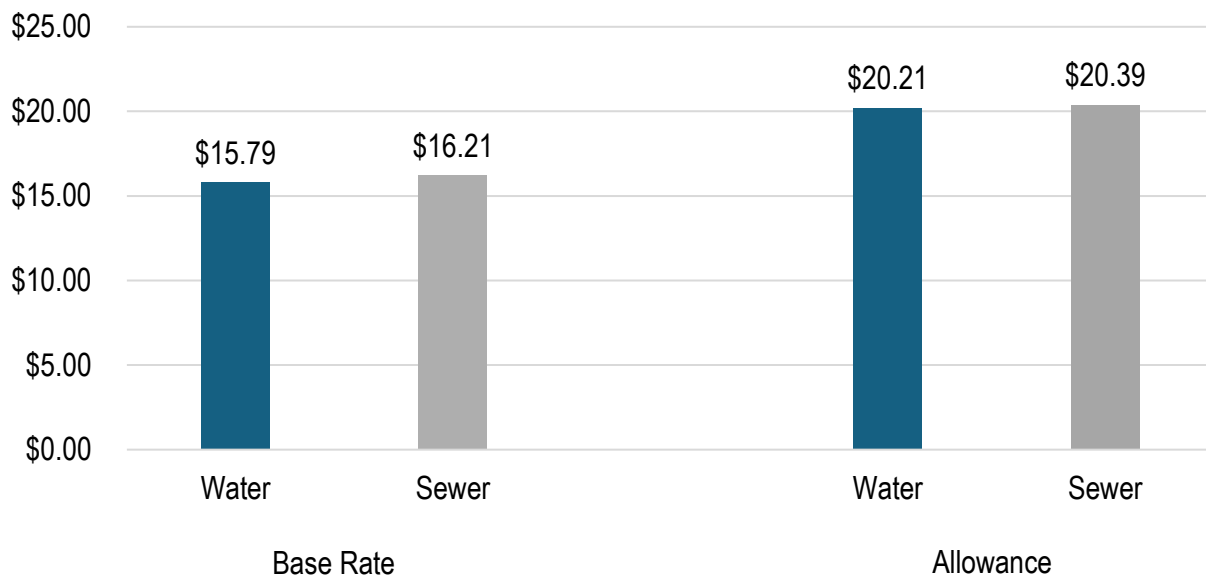
In Georgia, 44% of utilities have a base charge, and 53% have an allowance. The median monthly consumption allowance is 2,000 gallons.

Allowance

The amount charged to each account with an initial level of volume consumption tied to it.

- i.e., \$15 for first 2,000 gallons
- Usually falls within \$10-\$30 for 1,000 to 3,000 gallons

Average Base Rate and Allowance



WHAT DO RATE STRUCTURES LOOK LIKE?

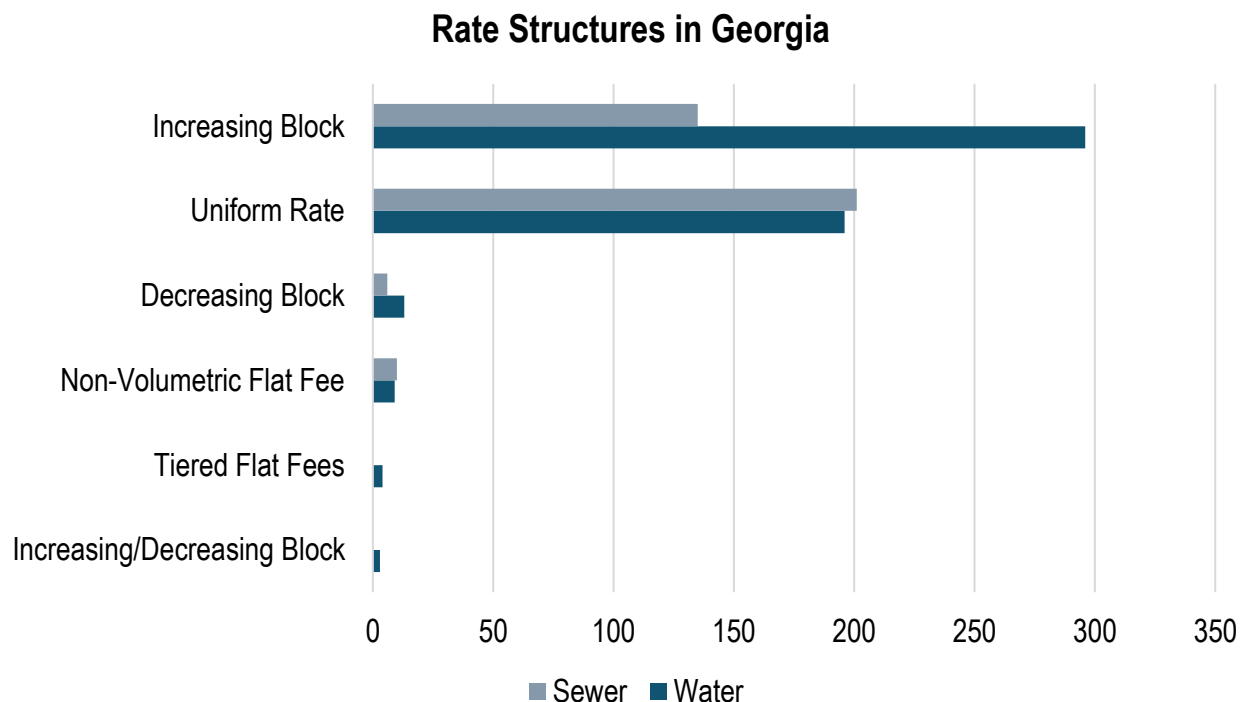
Ways to Charge for Volume

Volumetric charges are based on the volume used (after exceeding the allowance included in some cases). Three common ways to charge for volume are uniform, increasing block, and decreasing block rates.

Uniform rate: The rate does not change as the customer consumes more.

Increasing block rate: The rate increases as the customer uses more—often employed by utilities that want to encourage conservation by making higher volumes of consumption more expensive.

Decreasing block rate: The rate per unit decreases with greater consumption—may be used to encourage economic development but will likely not encourage conservation.



What is the most common volumetric rate structure?

In Georgia, most residential water utilities use an increasing block rate structure (56.4%), and most residential sewer utilities use a uniform block rate structure (56.5%) to charge for volume.

WHAT ARE THE UTILITIES CHARGING?

Georgia's Average Bills

Residential (5,000 gallons)

Water

\$34.73

\$416.76

Month

Year

The average water bill in Georgia for 5,000 gallons of water usage is \$34.73 per month, with 50% of customers typically paying between \$24.50 and \$41.30.



Sewer

\$38.74

\$464.88

Month

Year

The average sewer bill in Georgia for 5,000 gallons of sewer usage is \$38.74 per month, with 50% of customers typically paying between \$27.22 and \$48.00.



Green: Middle 50% or average cost within Georgia (25th-75th percentiles)

Gray: 10th-25th percentiles and 75th-90th percentiles of average cost (15% on both sides)

Red: Top and bottom 10% of average cost (0-10th percentiles, 90th-100th percentiles)

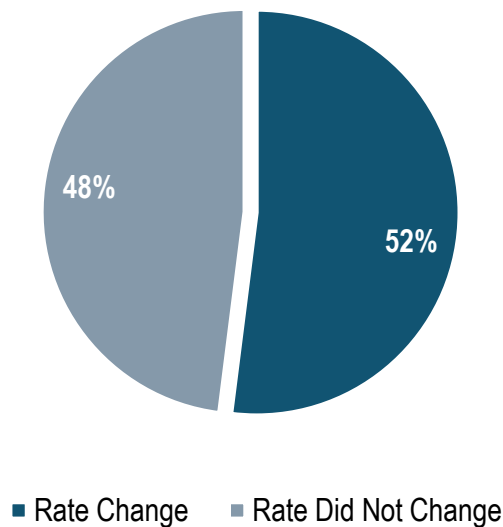
RATE CHANGES

In Georgia, most utilities regularly evaluate and modify their rate structures every one to two years. Best practice is for utilities to review their rates at least every two years to keep pace with inflation.

More than 50% of utilities have updated their rates since the last collection process in 2023.

Of the 281 utilities that updated their rates since 2023, 175 (32% of all utilities) updated their rate in 2025.

Rate Updates from 2023 to 2025



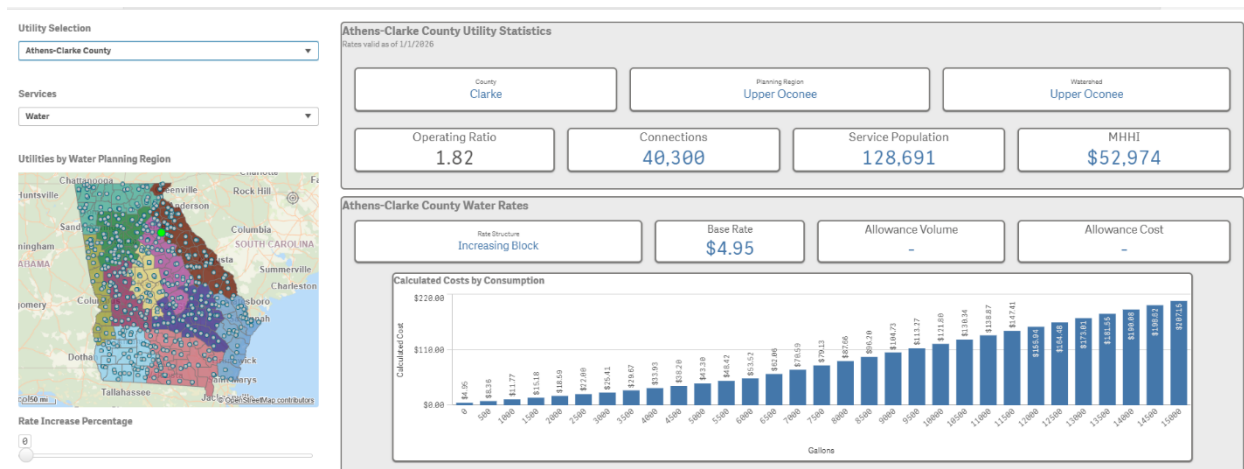
Utilities regularly review their rates to ensure customer fees are sufficient to cover the costs of operation and maintenance, account for asset depreciation, and fund necessary capital replacements over time. Providing water and wastewater service is costly and infrastructure intensive. Regular, predictable rate increases are common and recommended.

An annual or biennial review gives utilities the opportunity to evaluate if their current rates are enough to cover the necessary operating expenses and depreciation, not to mention savings goals for capital planning, emergencies, or other funds.

GEORGIA WATER AND WASTEWATER RATE DASHBOARDS

GEFA's three water and wastewater dashboards provide three views of the data. The table below summarizes the dashboard and its description.

Dashboard Name:	Dashboard Description:
Utility Focus	View a display of key identifiers, statistics, and rate information for a selected water or wastewater utility. (see example below)
Single Utility Comparison	Compare a selected water or wastewater utility's metrics to the range of utilities in its planning region and statewide.
Expanded Comparison	Compare a primary selection to a comparison group: - Primary Selection: Shows summary stats and key metrics for the selected filters. Results reflect Service, Volume, and Percent Increase sliders. If multiple utilities are chosen, values are averaged. - Comparison Group: Defines ranges for gauges and charts based on selected filters or chart inputs. Multiple selections can be tracked in the Qlik Selection Bar. For Connections and MHHI, ranges are set by dragging on chart axes or entering values manually.



GEORGIA WATER AND WASTEWATER SITE: EXTRA FEATURES

The georgiawaterrates.org website includes water and sewer rates data displayed in dashboards. The website also includes each utility's water rates report, a glossary of terms, dashboard help, and yearly reports.

Utility Reports:

The Rates Portal serves as a centralized resource for current water and sewer rates by utility. Available under “Utility Reports” on the dashboard homepage, it provides utility-specific reports with rate structures, additional service charges, and the original submitted rate sheets for verification and reference.

Glossary:

The Glossary page defines key water and sewer rate terms and utility characteristics used throughout the dashboards and reports, helping users consistently interpret and compare data across utilities. By centralizing consistent terminology, the glossary ensures that utility managers, officials, and the public can accurately interpret and compare rate data across different utilities.

Dashboard Help:

The Dashboard Help page explains key dashboard metrics, visualizations, and comparison methods, helping users understand data displays and evaluate differences across water and sewer utilities.

Yearly Reports:

The Yearly Reports page houses annual water and sewer trend reports, offering historical rate data and insights into trends across collection years.

Conclusion

The 2025-2026 Georgia Water and Sewer Rate Survey provides a current snapshot of utility rates and rate structures across the state. Through the participation of utilities representing all 159 Georgia counties, this report documents statewide trends and highlights the diversity of approaches used to fund, operate, and maintain essential water and wastewater services.

As communities continue to face challenges related to aging infrastructure, regulatory requirements, population change, and long-term financial sustainability, informed rate setting remains critical to protecting public health and supporting economic development. By providing reliable, standardized rate information, this report and the water rates reports and dashboards serve as resources for utility professionals, local officials, and other stakeholders as they evaluate utility performance, compare practices, and make data-driven decisions. Ultimately, the findings presented here contribute to a better understanding of Georgia's water and wastewater systems and support the sustainable delivery of these vital public services.

Questions or Feedback?

For assistance, comments, or suggestions, contact us at waterrates@uga.edu or use the embedded contact links throughout the website.